اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ۙ

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 34 Saba (The Sabaeans)

سُوْرَةُ سَبَإٍ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۭ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ ۝١

(34-1) All praise be to Allah to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, (1) and all praise be to Him in the World to Come. (2) He is Most Wise, All-Aware. (3)

(1) The Arabic word hamd is used both for praise and for gratitude and both the meanings are implied here. When Allah alone is the Owner of the whole universe and of everything in it, then inevitably He alone deserves to be praised for every beauty, perfection, wisdom, power and excellent skill and design shown and manifested by it. Therefore, every inhabitant of the world must thank Allah alone for any benefit and pleasure that he draws from anything here. For when no one else is a partner in the ownership of these things, no one else deserves to be praised or thanked.

(2) That is, “Just as every blessing in this world is granted by Allah alone, so also in the Hereafter whatever a person will get, he will get from His treasures and by His grace. Therefore, in the Hereafter too, Allah alone deserves to be praised as well as thanked.”

(3) That is, “All His works are based on perfect wisdom and knowledge. Whatever He does, He does right. He has full knowledge about every creation of His as to where it is, in what state it is, what are its requirements, what precisely needs to be done for its well-being, what it has done so far and what it will do in the future. He is not unaware of the world created by Him, but is fully aware of the condition and state of every particle in it.”

يَعۡلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا يَخۡرُجُ مِنۡهَا وَ مَا يَنۡزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ مَا يَعۡرُجُ فِيۡهَا ؕ وَهُوَ الرَّحِيۡمُ الۡغَفُوۡرُ ۲

(34-2) He knows what penetrates into the earth and what goes forth from it, what descends from the heaven and what ascends to it. He is the Most Merciful, the Most Forgiving. (4)

(4) That is, “If a person (or persons) is not being seized in spite of rebellion against Him in His Kingdom, it is not because this world is a lawless kingdom, but because Allah is All-Merciful and All-Forbearing. Although it is in His power to seize the sinner and the wrongdoer immediately on the commission of sin, to withhold his sustenance, to paralyze his body, and to put him to death suddenly, yet He does not do it so. It is the demand of His Beneficence that in spite of being All-Powerful, He gives the disobedient servant plenty of time and enough respite to mend his ways and as soon as he desists from his evil ways, He pardons and forgives him.”

وَ قَالَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا لَا تَاۡتِيۡنَا السَّاعَةُ ؕ قُلۡ بَلٰى وَ رَبِّىۡ لَتَاۡتِيَنَّكُمۡ عٰلِمِ الۡغَيۡبِ ۚ لَا يَعۡزُبُ عَنۡهُ مِثۡقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ لَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَ لَاۤ اَصۡغَرُ مِنۡ ذٰلِكَ وَ لَاۤ اَكۡبَرُ اِلَّا فِىۡ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ۳

(34-3) The unbelievers say: “How come the Hour is not coming upon us!” (5) Say to them: “Yes indeed, by my Lord, by Him Who fully knows the realm beyond the ken of perception, that the Hour shall inevitably come upon you. (6) Nothing escapes Him, not even the smallest particle in the heavens or the earth; nor is anything smaller or bigger than that but is in a Manifest Book.” (7)

(5) This they said satirically and mockingly. What they meant was: “This Prophet (peace be upon him) has been giving us the news of his coming of Resurrection for a long time now, but Resurrection has not overtaken us so far although we have openly denied and rejected him as a Prophet, have been insolent to him and have ridiculed him in every way.

(6) The use of the attribute “Knower of the unseen” for Allah while swearing by him by itself points to the fact that the coming

of Resurrection is certain, but no one knows except Allah, Knower of the unseen, when exactly it will come. This same theme has been explained at different places in the Quran in various ways. For details, see (Surah Al-Araf: Ayat 187), (Surah Ta Ha: Ayat 15), (Surah Luqman: Ayat 34), (Surah Al-Ahzab: Ayat 63), (Surah Al-Mulk: Ayats 25-26), (Surah An-Naziat: Ayats 42-44).

(7) This is one of the arguments for the possibility of the Hereafter as is being stated in (Verse 7) below. One of the reasons why the deniers of the Hereafter regarded the life after- death as irrational was; They said that when all human beings will have become dust after death, and scattered away in particles, how it will be possible to bring all the countless particles together and combine them to be re-created as the same human bodies once again. This doubt has been dispelled, saying, “Every particle wherever it is, is recorded in God’s register, and God knows where a particle is. Therefore, when He wills to recreate, He will not face any difficulty in gathering together all the particles of the body of each and every man.”

لِّيَجۡزِيَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِۚ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ لَهُم مَّغۡفِرَةٞ وَرِزۡقٞ كَرِيمٞ ٤

(34-4) (The Hour shall come) that He may reward those who believe and do righteous deeds. Theirs shall be forgiveness and a generous provision.

وَٱلَّذِينَ سَعَوۡ فِيٓ ءَايَٰتِنَا مُعَٰجِزِينَ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٞ مِّن رِّجۡزٍ أَلِيمٞ ٥

(34-5) As for those who worked against Our Signs in order to frustrate them, they shall suffer a painful chastisement. (8)

(8) The above was an argument for the possibility of the Hereafter: this is an argument for its need and necessity. It means: A time must come when the wicked should be requited for their wickedness and the righteous rewarded for their righteousness. Reason wants and justice demands that a worker of goodness should be rewarded and a worker of evil punished. Now when you see that in the present worldly life neither is an

evildoer fully requited for his evil nor a worker of goodness for his goodness, rather there are opposite results of evil and goodness in most cases, you should admit that this necessary demand of both reason and justice must be fulfilled at some time in the future. Resurrection and the Hereafter will be the same time. It is not its coming but it’s not coming which is contrary to reason and against justice.

In this connection, another point becomes evident from the preceding verses. They tell that the result of faith and righteous acts is forgiveness and a bounteous provision, and for those who strive and act antagonistically in order to discredit and defeat Allah’s religion, there will be a torment of the worst kind. This makes it manifest that he who believes sincerely will not be deprived of forgiveness even though he may not get a bounteous provision owing to some flaw or weakness in his deeds. And the one who is a disbeliever but who does not adopt an attitude of enmity and antagonism towards the true faith, will not be able to avoid the torment but he will be saved from the worst torment.

وَ يَرَى الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡعِلۡمَ الَّذِىۡۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَيۡكَ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ هُوَ الۡحَقَّ ۙ وَ يَهۡدِىۡۤ اِلٰى
صِرَاطِ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡحَمِيۡدِ ۙ﴿۶﴾

(34-6) (O Prophet), those who have knowledge see clearly that what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the Truth and directs to the Way of the Most Mighty, the Immensely Praiseworthy Lord. (9)

(9) That is, “These antagonists cannot succeed in their object to prove the truth presented by you false, however hard they may try, for they can only delude and misguide the ignorant people by their designs. Those possessed of knowledge cannot be deceived by them.”

وَ قَالَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا هَلۡ نَدُلُّكُمۡ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ يُّنَبِّئُكُمۡ اِذَا مُزِّقۡتُمۡ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ ۙ
اِنَّكُمۡ لَفِىۡ خَلۡقٍ جَدِيۡدٍ ۙ﴿۷﴾

(34-7) The unbelievers say: “Shall we direct you to the man who tells you that when you have been utterly broken to pieces, you will be raised to life again?

اَ فۡتَرٰی عَلَی اللّٰہِ کَذِبًا اَمۡ بِہٖ جِنَّۃٌ ؕ بَلِ الَّذِیۡنَ لَا یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡاٰخِرَۃِ فِی
الۡعَذَابِ وَ الضَّلٰلِ الۡبَعِیۡدِ ﴿۸﴾

(34-8) Has he forged a lie against Allah, or is he afflicted with madness?” (10) Nay, but those who do not believe in the Hereafter are doomed to be chastised and are far gone in error. (11)

(10) The chiefs of the Quraish knew well that it was extremely difficult for the common people to accuse Muhammad (peace be upon him) of being a liar, for the entire nation knew that he was completely a truthful person, and no one had ever heard a lie from him all his life. Therefore, they presented their charge against him before the people like this: “When this person utters an impossible thing like the life-after-death from his mouth, he is either uttering (God forbid) a falsehood deliberately, or he is mad.” But this accusation of madness also was as absurd as of falsehood, for a stupid person only could admit that such a wise and intelligent man as the prophet (peace be upon him) could be mad. That is why Allah did not feel it was necessary to refute their absurd charge by an argument, and only made mention of their wonder which they expressed at the possibility of the life-after-death.

(11) This is the first answer to their charge. It means: “O foolish people, it is you who have lost your reason. For you do not listen to the one who is informing you of the truth and are recklessly galloping on the way that leads to Hell. But the height of your stupidity is that you are calling the one who is anxious for your salvation, a mad person.”

اَفَلَمۡ یَرَوۡا اِلٰی مَا بَیۡنَ اَیۡدِیۡہِمۡ وَ مَا خَلۡفَہُمۡ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اِنۡ
نَّشَاۡ نَخۡسِفۡ بِہِمُ الۡاَرۡضَ اَوۡ نُسۡقِطۡ عَلَیۡہِمۡ کِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیَۃً لِّکُلِّ
عَبۡدٍ مُّنِیۡبٍ ﴿۹﴾

(34-9) Do they not see how the heavens and the earth encompass them from the front and the rear? We could, if We so wished, cause the earth to swallow them or let fragments of the sky fall upon them. (12) Verily there is a Sign in this for every servant (of Allah) who penitently turns to Him. (13)

(12) This is the second answer to their charge. To understand it well one should bear in mind the fact that three things were most prominent among the reasons for which the disbelieving Quraish denied the life-after-death: (1) They did not want to believe in any kind of accountability before God, for after believing in such a thing they would be left with no freedom whatsoever to behave and act as they pleased in the world. (2) They thought it was inconceivable that Resurrection would take place and the present material order of the universe would be destroyed and replaced by a new order. (3) They thought it was impossible that the people who had died hundreds of thousands of years in the past and whose bones even had decayed and disintegrated, would be raised back to life. With the same body and soul. The answer given above covers all these three aspects, and contains a severe warning as well. The details of the theme contained in these brief sentences are given below:

(1) If you ever had observed this earth and the heavens with clear sightedness, you would have seen that it is not a plaything nor has its creation come into being by accident. Everything in this universe points to the fact that it has been created by an All-Powerful Being with great wisdom. In such a wise system it would be highly absurd to think that somebody could be left to live an irresponsible and unaccountable life after he had been given the faculties of intellect and discrimination and authority.

(2) Anyone who sees the natural order with discerning eyes will realize that the occurrence of Resurrection is not at all difficult. It can take place suddenly as soon as the system in which the earth and the heavens are bound together is disturbed. And the same system testifies that the One who has made and is running this world today can create another world again. If it were

difficult for Him to do so, this world would not have existed as it does today.

(3) Your opinion and judgment about the Creator of the universe that it will be impossible for Him to resurrect the dead, is strange. The bodies of the men who die may utterly decay and disintegrate and be scattered but nevertheless remain within the bounds of this very universe and do not go anywhere outside its bounds. Then it is not at all difficult for the God Who has created this earth and the heavens to gather together everything from the earth and water and air wherever it happens to be. Whatever makes up your body today was collected and combined by Him, and brought out from this very earth, water and air. When the collecting and assembling of these elements together is possible today, how will it be impossible tomorrow?

Besides these three arguments, the discourse also contains a subtle warning to the effect: You arc surrounded by God's Kingdom on all sides. Wherever you may go, you would be covered and surrounded by the same universe. You cannot find any place of refuge against God, and God’s power is such that He can afflict you whenever He likes with a calamity from under your feet or from above your heads. You do not know what forces might be working under the very surface of the earth which you find as an abode of perfect peace and safety for yourselves, and when they would cause an earthquake to take place and turn the same earth into your grave. You do not know when a disaster might befall you, a lightning or a devastating rain, or some other calamity from the same sky under which you walk about with full peace and satisfaction of the heart as if it were the ceiling of your own house. In a state like this, your fearlessness of God, your heedlessness of any thought of the Hereafter and your vain and nonsensical talk against the admonition of a well-wisher has no other meaning than that you are only inviting your own doom.

(13) That is, the person who is neither prejudiced nor obstinate and stubborn, but is a sincere seeker of guidance from his God, can learn many lessons from the observation of the earth and heavens; but the one whose heart is turned away from God, will

see everything in the universe, but will never perceive any sign pointing to the truth.”

وَ لَقَد اٰتَ ۡ یۡ نَا دَاوٗدَ مِنَّا فَضۡ لًا ؕ یٰجِبَالُ اَوِّبِی مَعَهٗ وَ الطَّ یۡ رَ ؕ وَ اَلَنَّا لَهُ الۡ حَدِیۡ
﴿۱۰﴾

(34-10) We bestowed Our favor upon David. (14) (We commanded): “O mountains, sing Allah's praises with him”; (and so did We command) the birds. (15) We softened the iron for him, (saying):

(14) This is an allusion to the countless favors with which Allah had blessed the Prophet David (peace be upon him). He was an ordinary young man of the tribe of Judah, living at Bethlehem. In a campaign against the Philistines he slew the giant Goliath, the great enemy of Israel, and suddenly grew in esteem of the Israelites. With this event began his rise to prominence; so much so that after the death of Saul he was first elected king of Judah in Hebron, and then a few years later he was made king over all the tribes of Israel. He took Jerusalem and made it the capital of the kingdom of Israel. It was under his leadership that for the first time in history a God-worshipping kingdom was established, whose boundaries extended from the Gulf of Aqabah to the western banks of the River Euphrates. In addition to these favors, he was further graced with Divine bounties in the form of knowledge and wisdom, and the qualities of justice and mercy and devotion to the truth. (For details, see (E.N. 273 of Surah Al-Baqarah) and (E.N. 7 of Surah Bani Israil).

(15) For this refer to (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 79 and E.N. 71) thereof.

اَنِ اعۡمَلۡ سٰبِغٰتٍ وَّ قَدِّرۡ فِی السَّرۡدِ وَ اعۡمَلُوۡا صَالِحًا ؕ اِنِّیۡ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِیۡرٌ ﴿۱۱﴾

(34-11) “Fashion coats of mail and measure their links with care (16) and act righteously. I am watching over whatever you do.”

(16) For this refer to (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 80 and E.N. 72) thereof.

وَ لِسُلَيۡمٰنَ الرِّيۡحَ غُدُوُّهَا شَهۡرٌ وَّ رَوَاحُهَا شَهۡرٌ وَ اَسَلۡنَا لَهٗ عَيۡنَ الۡقِطۡرِ ؕ
وَ مِنَ الۡجِنِّ مَنۡ يَّعۡمَلُ بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ بِاِذۡنِ رَبِّهٖ ؕ وَ مَنۡ يَّزِغۡ مِنۡهُمۡ عَنۡ اَمۡرِنَا نُذِقۡهُ مِنۡ عَذَابِ
السَّعِيۡرِ ﴿۱۲﴾

(34-12) And We subdued the wind to Solomon: its morning course was a month's journey and its evening course was a month's journey. (17) We gave him a spring flowing with molten brass, (18) and We subdued for him jinn who, by his Lord's permission, (19) worked before him. Such of them as swerved from Our commandment, We let them taste the chastisement of the Blazing Fire.

(17) For this refer to(Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 81 and E.N. 74) thereof.

(18) Some former commentators have taken this to mean that a spring from the earth had erupted for the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) from which molten copper flowed out instead of water. But another interpretation of this verse can be that in the time of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) the work of melting and molding copper for different uses was done on a very large scale and the same has been referred to here as the flowing of a spring of molten copper for him. (See (E.N. 74 of Surah Al- Anbiya).

(19) The question whether the jinns who had been subdued to the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) were human beings of the mountain tribes or really the jinns who are well known by this name as the hidden creation has been discussed in detail in our commentary of Surah Al-Anbiya and Surah An-Naml. (See (E.N. 75 of Surah Al-Anbiya) and (E.Ns 23, 45) and (52 of Surah An-Naml).

يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ لَهٗ مَا يَشَآءُ مِنۡ مَّحَارِيۡبَ وَ تَمَاثِيۡلَ وَ جِفَانٍ كَالۡجَوَابِ وَ قُدُوۡرٍ رّٰسِيٰتٍ ؕ اِعۡمَلُوۡۤا
اٰلَ دَاوٗدَ شُكۡرًا ؕ وَ قَلِيۡلٌ مِّنۡ عِبَادِىَ الشَّكُوۡرُ ﴿۱۳﴾

(34-13) They made for him whatever he would desire: stately buildings, images, (20) basins like water-troughs and huge, built-in-cauldrons: (21) “Work, O house of David, in

thankfulness (to your Lord). [22] Few of My servants are truly thankful."

(20) The word tamatheel in the text is the plural of timthal, which in Arabic is used for every such thing as is made to resemble a natural thing, whether it is a human being, an animal, a tree, a flower, a river, or some inanimate object. Timthal is the name of every artificial thing which may have been made to resemble something made by God. (Lisan al-Arab). Timthal is every such picture which may have been made to resemble the likeness of something else, whether living or dead." (The commentary, Al-Kashshaf). On this basis the statement of the Quran does not necessarily imply that the images made for the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) were the pictures or images of human beings and animals. They might have been floral designs or natural landscape or different kinds of decorations with which the Prophet Solomon might have decorated his buildings and works.

The misunderstanding has been created by some commentators who have stated that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had gotten the pictures of the Prophets and the angels made for himself. They took such things from the Israelite traditions and then explained them saying that in the former Shariahs it was not forbidden to make the pictures. But while accepting and citing these traditions without question, these scholars did not keep in mind the fact that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) was a follower of the Mosaic law and in that law making of the pictures and images of human beings and animals was also forbidden as it is in the Shariah of Muhammad (peace be upon him). And they also did not remember that because of the enmity which a section of the Israelites bore against the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), they have accused him of crimes like polytheism, idolatry, sorcery and adultery. Therefore. one should not place reliance on the Israelite traditions and accept anything about this great Prophet, which might contradict any Shariah enjoined by God. Everyone knows that all the Prophets who came after the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) till the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) among the

Israelites were the followers of the Torah, and none of them had brought forth a new law, which might have abrogated the law of the Torah. Now the Torah clearly enjoins repeatedly that making of the pictures and images of human beings and animals is absolutely forbidden.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." (Exod. 20: 4) "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, nor rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it." (Levit. 26: 1).

"Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female. The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air. The likeness of anything that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth." (Deut. 4: 16-18).

"Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place." (Deut. 27: 15).

In the face of these clear and express injunctions how can it be accepted that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) might have employed the jinns to make pictures and images of the Prophets and the angels for him? And how can this thing be admitted on the authority of the statements of the Jews who accuse the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) of idolatry due to his love for polytheistic wives? (Kings, oh. 11).

However, the Muslim commentators, while citing the Israelite traditions, had made it clear that in the Shariah of Muhammad (peace be upon him) this thing is forbidden; therefore, it is no more lawful for anybody to make pictures and images in imitation of the Prophet Solomon. But some people of the modern time, who want to make photography and carving of idols lawful in imitation of the West, took this verse of the Quran

as an argument for themselves. They argue like this: “When a Prophet of Allah has done this and Allah Himself has mentioned this act of the Prophet in His Book, and has expressed no disapproval of it either, it must be lawful.”

This argument of these followers of the West is wrong for two reasons. First, the word tamatheel that has been used in the Quran does not explicitly give the meaning of the human and animal pictures, but it applies to the pictures of lifeless things as well. Therefore, only on the basis of this word, it cannot be concluded that it is lawful to make the human and animal pictures according to the Quran. Secondly, it is established by a large number of the Ahadith, which have been reported through authentic chains of transmitters, and commonly reported by many authorities, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) absolutely forbade the making and keeping of the pictures of the living things. In this connection, we reproduce below the authentic traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the verdicts given by the eminent companions:

(1) Mother of the faithful, Aishah has reported that Umm Habibah and Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with them all) had seen a church in Habash, which had pictures in it. When they mentioned this before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: “The custom among those people was that when a pious man from among them died, they would build a house of worship at his grave and would make his pictures in it. On the Day of Resurrection, these people will be among the most wretched creatures in the sight of Allah.” (Bukhari: Kitab as-Salat, Muslim: Kitab al-Masajid; Nasai: Kitab al-Masajid).

(2) Abu Huzaifah has reported that the messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah has cursed the maker of pictures. (Bukhari: Kitab al-Buyu, Kitab at-Talaq, Kitab al-Libas).

(3) Abu Zurah says, “Once when I entered a house along with Abu Hurairah, I saw that a painter was making pictures at the top. Thereupon, Abu Hurairah said, “I have heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say: Allah says who could be more wicked than the one who tries to create a thing like My creation? Let them, if they can, create a seed or an ant.” (Bukhari: Kitab al-

Libas; Musnad Ahmad. According to the tradition in Muslim, this was the house of Marwan).

(4) Abu Muhammad Hudhali has reported on the authority of Ali (may Allah be pleased with him): The Prophet (peace be upon him) was present at a funeral prayer when he said: “Who from among you would go to Al-Madinah and demolish every idol that he sees, and level down every grave that he sees, and blot out every picture that he sees.” A man said that he would go. So he went but came back without carrying out the task due to fear of the people of Al-Madinah. Then Ali submitted that he would go, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed him to go. Ali went, then came back and said: I have demolished every idol and leveled down every grave and blotted out every picture. Thereupon the Prophet said: “Now if any one made any of these things, he would be denying the teaching sent down on Muhammad (peace be upon him).” (Musnad Ahmad; Muslim: Kitab al-Janaiz; Nasai: Kitab al-Janiz also contain a tradition on the same subject).

(5) Ibn Abbas has reported: “And he who made a picture would be chastised and compelled to breathe the soul into it, which he will not be able to do.” (Bukhari: Kitab al-Ta’bir, Tirmidhi: Abwab al-Libas; Nasai: Kitab az-Zinah; Musnad Ahmad).

(6) Saeed bin al-Hasan says: “I was sitting with Ibn Abbas when a man came and said: O Ibn Abbas, I am a man who earns his living with his hand, and my profession is to make these pictures. Ibn Abbas replied: I shall say to you the same that I have heard from the Prophet (peace be upon him). I have heard this from him that Allah will chastise the one who makes pictures, and will not leave him till he breathes the soul into it, and he will never be able to breathe the soul into it. At this the man was much upset and his face turned pale. Ibn Abbas said: “Well, if you have to make the pictures, make of this tree, or of something which is lifeless.” (Bukhari: Kitab al-Buyu; Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Nasai: Kitabal-Zinah; Musnad Ahmad).

(7) Abdullah bin Masud has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “On the Day of Resurrection the ones to be most severely punished by Allah would be the painters of the pictures.” (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas; Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Nasai; Kitab al-Zinah; Musnad Ahmad).

(8) Abdullah bin Umar has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Those who paint the pictures will be punished on the Day of Resurrection. They will be asked to put life into what they have made. (Bukhari: Kitab al- Libas; Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Nasai; Kitab al-Zinah; Musnad Ahmad).

(9) Aishah says that she bought a cushion in which pictures had been painted. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) came and stood at the door and did not enter. I said: “I repent before God of any sin that I may have committed.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: “What is this cushion for?” I said: “This is here so that you may sit and may recline on it.” He said: "The painters of these pictures will be chastised on the Day of Resurrection: they will be asked to put life into what they have made; and the angels (i.e. the angels of mercy) do not enter a house which has pictures in it.” (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas; Muslim: Kitab al- Libas; Nasai: Kitab az-Zinah; Ibn Majah: Kitab at- Tajarat; Muwatta: Kitabal-Istidhan).

(10) Aishah says: “Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to my house, and I had hung a curtain which had pictures on it. The color of his face changed.” Then he took hold of the curtain and tore it and said: “Those who try to create like the creation of Allah will be among those who will be severely punished by Allah on the Day of Resurrection.” (Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Bukhari: Kitab al- Libas; Nasai: Kitab az-Zinah).

(11) Aishah says: “Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) came back; from a journey and I had hung a curtain at my door, which had the pictures of winged horses on it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded me to remove it and I removed it.” (Muslim: Kitab al-Libas, Nasai: Kitab al-Zinah).

(12) Jabir bin Abdullah says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited keeping of the pictures in the house and also forbade that somebody should make pictures. (Tirmidhi: Abwab al-Libas).

(13) Ibn Abbas has related on the authority of Abu Talhah Ansari: “The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that the angels (i.e. of mercy) do not enter a house where there is a dog, nor where there is a picture. (Bukhari: Kitabal-Libas).

(14) Abdullah bin Umar says: Once Gabriel promised to pay the Prophet (peace be upon him) a visit, but the time passed and he did not come. The Prophet (peace be upon him) felt

troubled and came out of his house and met him. When he complained to him, he (Gabriel) replied: “We do not enter a house where there is a dog or a picture.” (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas). Several Traditions on this subject have been related by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad on the authority of several companions.

As against these, there are some other traditions which allow some exceptions regarding the pictures. For example, according to a tradition of Abu Talhah Ansari, it is permissible to hang the curtain of a cloth which has pictures embroidered on it. (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas); and according to Aishah’s tradition, when she tore a cloth having pictures on it and made a cushion from it to be spread on the floor, the Prophet did not forbid it. (Muslim: Kitab al-Libas); and Salim bin Abdullah bin Umar’s tradition that the prohibition is of the picture which is displayed and installed prominently and not of the one which is used as a carpet: (Musnad Ahmad). But none of these traditions contradicts the traditions which have been cited above. None of these sanctions the making and painting of the pictures. They only tell that if a person has a piece of cloth having pictures on it, how he should use it. In this regard, the tradition of Abu Talhah Ansari cannot at all be accepted because it contradicts many other authentic traditions in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) not only forbade use of cloth having pictures on it as a curtain but even tore it into pieces. Moreover, Abu Talhah Ansari’s own practice that has been reported in Tirmidhi and Muwatta, in this regard, was that he did not even like to use a piece of cloth which had pictures on it, as a carpet, not to speak of hanging it as a curtain.

As for the traditions related by Aishah and Salim bin Abdullah, they only permit that if a picture is not placed prominently out of respect and esteem but is used as a carpet disrespectfully and is trodden under the feet, it could be tolerable. After all, how can these traditions be cited for obtaining sanction for the culture which regards the art of painting and portrait making and sculpture as an enviable achievement of the human civilization, and wants to popularize it among the Muslims?

The code of practice that the Prophet (peace be upon him) left for his Ummah with regard to the pictures can be seen from

the conduct and practice of the eminent companions, which they adopted in this regard. The admitted principle of law in Islam is that the authentic and reliable Islamic law is that which the Prophet (peace be upon him) enjoined during the latter part of his life after it had passed through gradual and preliminary injunctions and exceptions. And after the Prophet (peace be upon him) the eminent companions' practice and persistence on a particular way is a proof that he left the Ummah on that way. Now let us see how these holy and pious people treated and regarded the pictures.

Umar said to the Christians: "We do not enter your churches because there are pictures in them." (Bukhari: Kitab as-Salat).

Ibn Abbas would sometimes offer his Prayer in the church, but not in a church which had pictures in it. (Bukhari; Kitab as-Salam).

Abu al-Hayyaj al-Asadi says: Ali said to me: "Should I not send yon on the same mission on which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had sent me? And it is this that you should not leave any idol that you should not break, and you should not leave any grave that you should not level down, and you should not leave any picture that you should not blot out." (Muslim: Kitab al-Janaiz; Nasai: Kitab al- Janeiz).

Hanash al-Kinani says: Ali said to his chief of the police: "Do you know on what mission I am going to send you? On the mission on which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had sent me, that you should blot out every picture and level down every grave." (Musnad Ahmad).

This very established law of Islam has been accepted and acknowledged by the jurists of Islam and regarded as an article of the Islamic law. Thus, Allama Badruddin Aini writes with reference to Tauhid.

"Our elders (i.e. the Hanifite jurists) and other jurists say that making the pictures of a living thing is not only unlawful but strictly forbidden and a major sin, whether the maker has made it for a purpose where it would be held with contempt or for some other use and purpose. The making and painting of the picture anyway is unlawful, because it is an attempt to create like the creation of Allah. Likewise. The making of pictures whether on the cloth, or on the carpet, or on a coin, or on a utensil, or on a wall, is in any case unlawful. However, making the pictures of

something else, for instance, of a tree, etc. is not forbidden. Whether the picture casts a shadow or not is immaterial. The same is the opinion of Imam Malik, Sufyan Thauri, Imam Abu Hanifah, and other scholars. Qadi Iyad says that the dolls of girls are an exception, but Imam Malik; disapproved of even buying them." (Umdat al-Qari vol. xxii p. 70). Imam Nawawi has elucidated this same view in greater detail in his commentary of Muslim. Please refer to Sharh Nawawi, Egyptian Ed., vol. xiv, pp. 81-82).

This is then the injunction about the making of pictures. As regards the use of the pictures made by others, Allama Ibn Hajar has cited the views of the jurists of Islam as follows:

"Ibn Arabi, the Malikite jurist, says that the consensus of opinion is that the picture that casts a shadow is unlawful, whether it is regarded with contempt or not. Only the dolls of girls are an exception." Ibn Arab; also says that the picture which does not cast a shadow but which persists (as in the printed form, unlike the reflection of a mirror) is also unlawful, whether it is regarded with contempt or not. However, if its head is cut off, or its limbs or parts are separated, it may be used. Imam al-Harmayn has cited a verdict according to which a curtain or a cushion having pictures on it may be used, but the picture hung on the wall or ceiling is forbidden, for it would show respect and esteem for it, while the picture on the curtain or cushion, on the contrary, would be held with contempt. Ibn Abi Shaibah has related on the authority of Ikrimah that the scholars among the immediate followers of the companions held the opinion that the picture's being on the carpet or cushion is disgraceful for it; they also opined that the picture hung prominently is unlawful, but the one trodden under the feet is permissible. The same opinion has been cited from Ibn Sirin, Salim bin Abdullah, Ikrimah bin Khalid and Said bin Jubair." (Fath al-Bari, vol. X, p. 300).

The details given above clearly show that the forbidding of the pictures is not a controversial or doubtful matter in Islam, but it is an established article of the law according to the express instructions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the practice of the companions and the unanimous verdicts of the jurists of Islam, which cannot be changed by the hairsplitting of the people influenced by the alien cultures.

In this connection, certain other things should also be understood so that there remains no misunderstanding in this regard.

Some people try to make a distinction between a photograph and a painting, whereas the Shariah forbids the picture itself and not any process or method of making pictures. There is no difference between a photograph and a painting: they are both pictures. Whatever difference is there between them is due to the method of making them, and in this regard the Shariah injunctions make no difference between them.

Some people give the argument that the picture was forbidden in Islam in order to put an end to idol worship. As there is no such danger now, this injunction should be annulled. But this argument is absolutely wrong. In the first place, nowhere in the traditions has it been said that the pictures have been made unlawful in order to avoid the danger of shirk and idol worship. Secondly, the assertion that shirk and idol worship have been eradicated from the world is also baseless. Today in the IndoPak subcontinent itself there are millions of idol worshippers and polytheists. Shirk is being practiced in different regions of the world in different ways. The Christian people of the Book also are worshipping the images and portraits of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and Mary and other saints; so much so that even a large number of the Muslims also are involved in the evil of worshipping others than God.

Some people say that only those pictures which are polytheistic in nature should be forbidden, i.e. pictures and images of those persons who have been made gods. As for the other pictures and images there is no reason why they should be forbidden. But the people who argue like this, in fact, become their own law-givers instead of deriving law from the commandments and instructions of the Law-Giver. They do not know that the picture does not become the cause of polytheism and idol worship only but has become the cause of many other mischief in the world, and is becoming so even today. The picture is one of those major means by which the aura of greatness of the kings, dictators and political leaders has been impressed upon the minds of the common people. The picture also has been used extensively for spreading obscenity and today this mischief has

touched heights unknown to previous history. Pictures have also been used for sowing discord and hatred and for creating mischief between the nations and for misleading the masses in different ways. Therefore, the view that the Law-Giver forbade the picture only in order to eradicate idol worship is basically wrong. The Law-Giver has absolutely forbidden pictures of the living things. If we are not our own law-givers but are the followers of the Law-Giver, we should desist from this accordingly. It is not at all lawful for us that we should propose from ourselves a basis for a particular injunction and then, on the basis of it, should declare some pictures lawful and some as unlawful.

Some people refer to some apparently harmless kinds of pictures and say that there could be no danger from these: they could not cause the mischief of shirk, obscenity, political propaganda or other evils; therefore, they should not be forbidden. Here again the people commit the same error: they first propose a cause and a basis for an injunction, and then argue that when the cause is not found in a particular forbidden thing, it should not be forbidden. Furthermore, these people also do not understand the rule of the Islamic Shariah that it does not make vague and ambiguous boundaries between the lawful and the unlawful from which a man may not be able to judge when he is within the bounds and when he has crossed them; but it draws a clear line of demarcation which every person can see like the broad daylight. The demarcation in respect of the picture is absolutely clear: pictures of living things are unlawful and of the lifeless things lawful. This line of demarcation does not admit any ambiguity. The one who has to follow the injunctions can clearly know what is permissible for him and what is not. But, if some pictures of the living things had been declared lawful and some unlawful, no list of the two kinds of the pictures however extensive, would have made the boundary between the lawful and the unlawful clear, and the case of many pictures would still have remained ambiguous as to whether they were within the bounds of lawfulness or outside them. This is similar to the Islamic injunction about wine that one should completely abstain from it, and this marks a clear limit, But, if it had been said that one should abstain from such a quantity of wine as intoxicates, it would be impossible to demarcate between the lawful and the

unlawful , and no one would have been able to decide what quantity of wine he could drink; and where he had to stop. (For a further discussion, see Rasail-o-Masail, Part 1, pp. 152-155).

(21) This gives an idea of the generous and large scale hospitality practiced by the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). Big bowls like troughs had been arranged to serve as containers of food for the guests and heavy cooking pots were meant for cooking food for thousands of the people at one and the same time.

(22) “Grateful”: work like grateful servants. The mere verbal thankfulness of a person who acknowledges only verbally the favors done by the benefactor but uses them against his will is meaningless. The truly grateful person is he who acknowledges the favors with the tongue as well as uses and employs the favors according to the will of the benefactor.

فَلَمَّا قَضَيۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ ٱلۡمَوۡتَ مَا دَلَّهُمۡ عَلَىٰ مَوۡتِهِۦٓ إِلَّا دَآبَّةُ ٱلۡأَرۡضِ تَأۡكُلُ مِنسَأَتَهُۥۖ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ ٱلۡجِنُّ أَن لَّوۡ كَانُواْ يَعۡلَمُونَ ٱلۡغَيۡبَ مَا لَبِثُواْ فِي ٱلۡعَذَابِ ٱلۡمُهِينِۖ ١٤

(34-14) When We executed Our decree of death on Solomon, nothing indicated to the jinn that he was dead except a worm eating away his staff. So when Solomon fell down, the jinn realized (23) that had they known what lies in the realm beyond perception, they would not have continued to be in this humiliating chastisement. (24)

(23) Another meaning of the sentence can be: "The true state and condition of the jinns became clear and exposed. "According to the first meaning, it will mean: “The jinns realized that their claim to have the knowledge of the unseen was wrong.” According to the second, it will mean: “The people who thought that the jinns possessed the knowledge of the unseen, came to know that they had no such knowledge.”

(24) Some modern commentators have interpreted it as follows: As the Prophet Solomon’s (peace be upon him) son, Rehoboam, was unworthy and given to luxurious living and

surrounded by flatterers, he could not sustain the heavy burden of responsibility that fell on his shoulders after the death of his great father. A short time after his succession, the kingdom collapsed, and the frontier tribes (i.e. of the jinns), whom the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had subdued by his mighty power, rebelled and broke away. But this interpretation does not at all conform to the words of the Quran. The scene depicted by the words of the Quran is somewhat like this: Death came to the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) in a state when he was standing or sitting with the support of a staff. His body stood in place due to the staff, and the jinns continued to perform their duties and services, thinking that he was living. At last, when the wood louse started eating away the staff and it became hollow from within, the Prophet Solomon's (peace be upon him) body fell down; then the jinns realized that he had died. After all, why should this clear and unambiguous description of the event be construed to mean that the wood louse implied the unworthiness of the Prophet Solomon's son, and the staff implied his power and authority and the falling down of his body implied the disintegration of his kingdom? Had Allah meant to say all this, there was no shortage of the words in the vast Arabic language. The Quran, in fact, has nowhere used such enigmatic language. How could the common Arabs, who were its first addressees, have solved this riddle?

Then, the most absurd part of this interpretation is that according to it the jinns imply the people of the frontier tribes whom the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had subdued to perform certain services under him. The question is, which of these tribes had claimed to have the knowledge of the unseen, and whom did the mushriks regard as the knower of the unseen? A person who reads the last words of the verse with open eyes can himself see that jinn here necessarily implies a group of beings who either had themselves made a claim to have the knowledge of the unseen, or who, the people believed, had the knowledge of the unseen; and the secret of this group's being ignorant and unaware of the unseen became disclosed when they continued to serve the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) under the impression that he was living, whereas he had died.

This statement of the Quran was enough to induce an honest person to revise his this opinion that the jinn imply the frontier tribes, but the people who feel shy of admitting the existence of the hidden creation called the jinn before the materialistic world still insist on this interpretation of theirs in spite of the plain meaning of the Quran.
At several places in the Quran Allah tells that the mushriks of Arabia regarded the jinns as the associates of Allah, and as His children, and used to seek their refuge:

"They set up the jinns as partners with Allah. whereas He has created them." (Surah Al-Anam, Ayat 100). "And they have invented a blood-relationship between Allah and the jinns." (Surah As-Safat, Ayat 158). "And that, some people from among the men used to seek refuge with some people from among the jinns." (Surah Al-Jinn, Ayat: 6).

One of their beliefs was that they regarded the jinns as the knower of the unseen and hidden. and used to turn to them to obtain knowledge of the hidden things. Allah has related this event here in order to repudiate this belief and to make the Arabs realize that they are following the false creeds of ignorance without any valid reason, whereas the fact is that these beliefs are absolutely baseless. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 63)below.

لَقَدۡ كَانَ لِسَبَإٖ فِي مَسۡكَنِهِمۡ ءَايَةٞۖ جَنَّتَانِ عَن يَمِينٖ وَشِمَالٖۖ كُلُواْ مِن
رِّزۡقِ رَبِّكُمۡ وَٱشۡكُرُواْ لَهُۥۚ بَلۡدَةٞ طَيِّبَةٞ وَرَبّٞ غَفُورٞ ١٥

(34-15) For Sheba (25) there was also a Sign in their dwelling place: (26) the two gardens (27) to the right and to the left." Eat of your Lord's provision, and render thanks to Him. Most pleasant is your land and Most Forgiving is your Lord."

(25) To understand the continuity of the subject matter one should keep in view the theme as expressed in(Ayats 1-9). There it has been pointed out that the pagans of Arabia regarded the coming of the Hereafter as irrational, and declared openly that the Messenger (peace be upon him) who was presenting this doctrine was either a mad man or deliberately was fabricating

falsehood. In reply to this, Allah first gave some rational arguments, which we have elaborated in (E.Ns 7, 8 and 12)above. Then in (Ayats 10-21) the story of the Prophets David and Solomon and of Saba has been related as an historical argument, which is meant to impress the reality that the history of the human species on the earth itself testifies to the law of retribution. If man studies his own history carefully, he will see that this world is not a lawless kingdom, which might be functioning blindly, but it is being ruled by an All-Hearing and All- Seeing Being, Who treats and deals with His grateful servants in one way and with the ungrateful and thankless people in quite another way. If one wants one can learn this lesson from the same history that in the Kingdom of God which has such a character, goodness and evil cannot have one and the same result. The necessary demand of its justice is that a time must come when goodness should be fully rewarded and evil fully punished.

(26) That is, a sign of this that whatever they have is the gift of someone else and not of their own creation, and a sign of this that the one worthy of their service and worship and gratitude is that God who has blessed them with these favors and not those who have no share in bestowing these, and a sign of this that their wealth is not imperishable but can perish even as it has been amassed.

(27) This does not mean that there were only two gardens in the whole country, but that the entire land of Saba was like a garden. Wherever a man stood, he could see a garden on his right and a garden on his left.

فَأَعۡرَضُوا۟ فَأَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ سَيۡلَ ٱلۡعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلۡنَٰهُم بِجَنَّتَيۡهِمۡ جَنَّتَيۡنِ ذَوَاتَيۡ أُكُلٍ خَمۡطٍ وَأَثۡلٍ وَشَيۡءٖ مِّن سِدۡرٖ قَلِيلٖ ١٦

(34-16) But they turned away (28) and so We let loose upon them a devastating flood (29) that swept away the dams and replaced their gardens by two others bearing bitter fruits, tamarisks, and a few lote trees. (30)

(28) That is, they adopted the way of disobedience and ingratitude instead of obedience and gratefulness.

(29) The word arim as used in sayl al-arim in the text is derived from the South Arabic word ariman, which stands for a dam. In the ancient inscriptions that have been unearthed in the ruins of the Yaman, this word has been commonly used in this meaning. For example, in an inscription dated 542 or 543 A.D. which Abraha, the Abyssinian governor of the Yaman, had gotten installed after the repairs to the great dam of Maarib, this word has been used repeatedly in the meaning of a dam. Therefore, sayl al- arim implies a flood that comes when a dam breaks.

(30) That is, as a result of the flood that came after the dam burst, the whole land was laid waste. The canals which the Sabaeans had dug out by building dams between the mountains were ruined and the irrigation system destroyed. Then the same land which had been like a garden before became a jungle of wild growth and no eatable plants were left in it except the small plume like fruit of the lote bushes.

ذٰلِكَ جَزَيۡنٰهُم بِمَا كَفَرُوۡا ؕ وَ هَلۡ نُجٰزِىۡۤ اِلَّا الۡكَفُوۡرَ ۱۷

(34-17) Thus did We retribute them for their ingratitude. And none do We retribute in this manner except the utterly ungrateful.

وَ جَعَلۡنَا بَيۡنَهُمۡ وَ بَيۡنَ الۡقُرَى الَّتِىۡ بٰرَكۡنَا فِيۡهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً وَّ قَدَّرۡنَا فِيۡهَا السَّيۡرَ ؕ سِيۡرُوۡا فِيۡهَا لَيَالِىَ وَ اَيَّامًا اٰمِنِيۡنَ ۱۸

(34-18) We placed other prominent towns between them, the towns that We had blessed and had set well-measured stages between them. (31) Move back and forth between them, night and day, in perfect security.

(31) “Towns which We had blessed”: The lands of Syria and Palestine, which have been generally mentioned in the Quran by this title. For instance, in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 137), (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 1), (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 71, 81).

“Visible towns”: Habitations situated on the highway and not inside the country. It may also mean that the habitations were not very far apart but contiguous so that as the outlying areas of one habitation came to an end those of the other started coming into view.

“And We made the stages (of journey) between them easy” implies that from the Yaman to the borders of Syria the whole journey passed through inhabited lands, and the distances between one station and another were known and determined. That makes the distinction between the journey through inhabited land and the journey through uninhabited desert area. In the desert the traveler continues to travel as long as he wills and halts when tired. Contrary to this, in settled areas as the distance between one habitation and the other is well known, the traveler can plan beforehand when he would break his journey, where he would have his midday rest and when he would stay for the night.

فَقَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا بٰعِدۡ بَيۡنَ اَسۡفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ فَجَعَلۡنٰهُمۡ اَحَادِيۡثَ وَمَزَّقۡنٰهُمۡ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوۡرٍ ﴿۱۹﴾

(34-19) But they said: “Lord, make the stages of our journeys longer.” (32) They wronged their own selves so We reduced them to bygone tales, and utterly tore them to pieces.[33] Verily there are Signs in this for everyone who is steadfast and thankful. (34)

(32) They may not have prayed thus in so many words. As a matter of fact, whoever is ungrateful to Allah for His blessings, tells Allah, as if to say that he is not worthy of those blessings. Likewise, the nation which abuses the bounties of Allah, in fact, prays to Him, as if to say, “Our Lord, withdraw Your blessings from us, we are not worthy of these.” Moreover, the words in the text also seem to suggest that the Sabaeans perhaps regarded their large population as a calamity for themselves, and they also wanted like the other foolish people that their population should fall.

(33) That is, the people of Saba were so dispersed in all directions that their dispersion became proverbial. Even today when the Arabs have to mention the complete dispersion of any people they refer to the people of Saba as an example. When Allah caused His blessings to be withdrawn from them, the different tribes of the Sabaeans started leaving their homes and migrating to other parts of Arabia. The Banu Ghassan went to settle in Jordan and Syria, the Aus and Khazraj in Yathrib, and the Khuzaah in Tihamah near Jeddah. The Azd left for Uman and the Bani Lakhm and Judham and Kindah were also forced to give up their homes for other places. Thus, the Sabaeans ceased to exist as a nation and became a mere legend.

(34) In this context the “steadfast and grateful” implies every such person (or persons) who does not lose his balance after he has received blessings from Allah, nor exults at prosperity, nor becomes heedless of God Who has blessed him with these. Such a person can learn great lessons from the history of those people who adopted the way of disobedience after attaining opportunities for progress and prosperity and ultimately met with their doom.

وَ لَقَدۡ صَدَّقَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اِبۡلِيۡسُ ظَنَّهٗ فَاتَّبَعُوۡهُ اِلَّا فَرِيۡقًا مِّنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾

(34-20) Iblis found his estimate of them to be true, and they followed him, except a party of the believers. (35)

(35) History shows that in ancient times there lived among the Sabaeans a small group of the people, who believed in one God, apart from all other gods. The inscriptions that have been discovered in the ruins of Yaman as a result of modern archaeological research point to the existence of this small element. Some inscriptions of the period about 650 B.C. indicate that at several places in the kingdom of Saba there existed such houses of worship as were exclusively meant for the worship of dhu-samavi or dhusamaavi (i.e. Rabb as-samaa: Lord of the heavens). In some places this Deity has been mentioned as Malikan dhusamavi (the King who is the Owner of the heavens). This remnant of the Sabaeans continued to live in Yaman for

centuries afterwards. Thus, in an inscription of 378 A.D. there is also mention of a house of worship built in the name of Ilah dhu-semevi. Then, in an inscription dated 465 A.D. the words are; Bi-nasr wa rida ilah-in baal samin wa ardin (i.e. with the help and support of that God who is the Owner of the heavens and the earth). In another inscription of the period dated 458 A.D., the word Rahman has been used for the same God, the actual words being bi-rida Rahmanan (i. e. with the help of Rahman.

وَ مَا كَانَ لَ عَلَيهِم رِّ سُل طٰنٍ اِلَّا لِنَعۡ لَمَ مَنۡ هُوَّ مِنۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَ مِمَّنۡ هُوَ مِنۡ هَا فِ شَكٍّ ؕ وَ رَبُّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ حَفِيۡظٌ ؕ ﴿۲۱﴾

(34-21) Iblis had no authority over them and whatever happened was in order that We might know him who believes in the Hereafter as distinct from him who is in doubt about it. (36) Your Lord is watchful over everything. (37)

(36) That is, Iblis did not have the power to have forcibly misled these people to the way of God’s disobedience although they had wanted to adopt His obedience. Allah had only given him the power that he may seduce and mislead them and make all such people his followers, who may like to follow him of their own accord. And Iblis was provided these opportunities for seduction so that the believers of the Hereafter were distinguished from those who entertained doubts about its coming.

In other words, this divine statement makes the truth explicit that nothing in this world other than belief in the Hereafter can ensure man’s adherence to the right way. If a man disbelieves that he is to be raised back to life after death and has to render an account of his deeds before his God, he will certainly be misled and go astray, for he will never be able to develop in himself the sense of responsibility which alone can make him adhere to the right way. That is why the artifice of Satan by which he ensnares man is that he makes him heedless of the Hereafter. The one who escapes this satanic enticement can never agree that he should sacrifice the interests of his real everlasting life to the interests of the transient life of the world. On the contrary, the one who disbelieves in the Hereafter under the evil influence of

Satan, or at least entertains doubts about it, can never be induced to withdraw from the cash bargain being made in this world only due to the apprehension that it might cause loss in some later life. Whoever has gone astray in the world, has gone astray only due to the denial of the Hereafter, or some suspicion about it; and whoever has adopted righteousness has done so because his righteous deeds have issued from his belief in the Hereafter.

(37) To understand fully the allusions made in the Quran to the history of the Sabaeans, one should also keep in view the information that has been obtained through other historical sources about this nation.

Historically, Saba was a great nation of Southern Arabia. which comprised some large tribes. Imam Ahmad, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Abd al-Barr and Tirmidhi have related from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that Saba was the name of an Arab, from whose race issued the following tribes of Arabia: Kindah. Himyar, Azd, Ash ariyyin, Madhhij, Anmar (with its two branches: Khatham and Bajilah), Amilah, Judham, Lakhm and Ghassan.

Since antiquity this Arabian nation has been well known to the rest of the world. Ur inscriptions of 2500 B.C. mention it by the name of Sabom. Then in the Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions and also in the Bible it has been mentioned several times. (See, for instance, Psalms 72:15; Jeremiah 6: 20; Ezekiel 27:22, 38: 13; Job 6: 19). The Greek and Roman historians and the geographer Theophrastus (288 B.C.) have mentioned it continuously for many centuries of the Christian era since before Jesus (peace be upon him).

Its home was the south-western corner of the Arabian peninsula, now called al-Yaman. Its rise to prominence started in 1100 B.C. In the time of the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them) the Sabaeans had become world famous as a wealthy people. In the beginning they were a sun-worshipping nation. Then, when their queen affirmed faith at the hand of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) 965-926 B.C., probably

most of them became Muslims. But then in some unknown later period they again began to worship gods and goddesses tike Almaqah (the moon-god), Athtar (Venus), Dhat Hamim, Dhat Badan (the sun-god), Harmatam or Harimat and many others. Almaqah was their chief deity, and the kings made claim to the people's obedience as representatives of this deity. Many inscriptions have been unearthed in the Yaman, which show that the whole land abounded in the temples of these gods, especially of Almaqah, and thanks giving services for them were held at every important event.

As a result of the modern archaeological researches about 3,000 inscriptions have been discovered, which throw a good deal of light on the history of this nation. Besides these, if the information yielded by the Arabian traditionists and the Roman and Greek historians is compiled, a detailed history of this nation can be prepared. According to this information the following are the important periods of its history:

(1) The Pre-mid-seventh Century Period: In this period Mukarrib was the title of the Sabaean kings. Probably a synonym of Muqarrib, it signified that the kings regarded themselves as the link between men and gods; or, in other words, they were the priest-kings. Their capital was Sirwah, whose ruins are found at a day’s journey to the west of Maarib, and are now called al-Kharibah. The foundations of the great Maarib dam were laid in this period: then the different kings extended it from time to time.

(2) 650 B. C. to 115 B. C.: In this period the Sabaean kings discarded Mukarrib and adopted the title of Malik (king), which signified that theocracy was replaced by secular kingship. They left Sirwah and made Maarib their capital and extended it in every way. This place lay 3900 feet above the sea, and is some 60 miles east of Sana. Even today its ruins bear evidence that it was once the centre of a highly civilized nation.

(3) 115 B.C. to 300 A.D: In this period the Sabaean kingdom fell under the domination of the tribe of Himyar, a more numerous tribe of Saba. They discarded Maarib and made their central place Raydan their capital, which later became known as Zafar. Its ruins can still be seen on a circular hill near the modern

city of Yarim. Close by it there resides a small tribe by the name of Hinmar, perhaps the remnant of the great nation which was once well known throughout the world for its glory and grandeur. In the same period the word Yamanat and Yamanaat began to be used for the first time for a part of the kingdom, which gradually became Yaman and the name of the entire land, which extends from Asir to Aden and from Bab al-Mandab to Hadramaut. During this very period the decline of the Sabaean began.

(4) 300 A.D. to the rise of Islam: This is the period of the Sabaea's destruction. They started fighting civil wars, which provided occasion for external intervention. This resulted in the decline in their trade and their agriculture and even loss of political freedom. Taking advantage of the internal conflicts between the Himyarites and other tribes, the Abyssinians occupied the Yaman and ruled it briefly from 340 A.D. to 378 A.D. Then, though political freedom was restored, breaches began to appear in the great dam of Maarib, which in 450 or 451 A.D. led to the catastrophe occasioned by the bursting of the dam as has been referred to in verse 16 above. Although after it till the time of Abraha the dam was extensively repaired, the population that had dispersed could not be brought back, nor could the ruined system of irrigation and agriculture be restored. In 523 A.D., dhu-Nuwas, the Jewish king of the Yaman, carried out the great massacre of the Christians of Najran, which has been referred to in the Quran under ashab alukhdud (Surah Al-Burooj, Ayat 4). In retaliation, the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia invaded Yaman and occupied the entire land. Later the Abyssinian governor of Yaman, Abrahah, in a bid to put an end to the central position of the Kabah and to bring the entire western Arabia into the sphere of the Byzantine Abyssinian influence invaded Makkah in 570 or 571 A.D., a few days before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Abyssinian army was completely destroyed as alluded to under ashab il-feel (Surah Al-Feel, Ayat 1) in the Quran. At last, in 575 A.D. Yaman fell to the Iranians; their rule came to an end in 628 A.D. when their governor Badhan embraced Islam.

The Sabaeans owed their prosperity to two main factors: agriculture and commerce. They had developed their agriculture by means of a wonderful irrigation system unknown in the ancient

world except in Babylon. There were no natural rivers in their land; in the rainy season small hill-torrents rose on which they had built dams everywhere in the country and collected water in small lakes from which they had taken out canals to water their lands. This had virtually turned the whole country into a vast garden as mentioned in the Quran. The largest reservoir was the lake which had been formed by the construction of a dam on the opening in the Jabal Balaq near Maarib. But when Allah caused His favors to be turned away from them, the great dam burst in the mid-fifth century A.D. and the resulting floods went on breaking one dam after the other on the way, destroying the entire irrigation system, which could never again be restored.

For commerce the Sabaeans had been blessed by God with the most favorable geographical position of which they took full advantage. For more than a thousand years they monopolized the means of trade between the East and the West. On the one hand, they received silk from China, spices from Indonesia and Malabar, fabrics and swords from India, negro slaves, monkeys, ostrich feathers and ivory from East Africa at their ports, and on the other, they transported this merchandise to the Egyptian and Syrian marts, to be supplied onward to Rome and Greece. Besides, they themselves were great producers of frankincense and myrrh and other perfumes, which were in great demand in Egypt and Syria and in Rome and Greece.

Two great routes existed for this international trade: the sea route and the land route. The maritime trade remained in the Sabaeans' control for more than a thousand years for they alone knew the mysteries of the Red Sea monsoons, breakers and rocks and the anchorages, and no other nation could risk navigation through these dangerous waters. Through this maritime route they took their trade goods to the harbors of Jordan and Egypt. The land routes from Aden and Hadramaut joined at Maarib, from where a highway led to Petra through Makkah, Jeddah, Yathrib, Al-Ula, Tabuk and Aylah, forking at the northern end to Egypt and Syria. Along this land route, a number of Sabaean colonies had been established right from the Yaman to the borders of Syria, as mentioned in the Quran, and trade caravans passed by these day and night. The signs of many of these colonies still exist on this

route from which the Sabaean and the Himyarite inscriptions are being discovered.

After the first century after Jesus (peace be upon him) Sabaean trade began to suffer a decline. When the Greek, and then the Roman, kingdoms were established in the Middle East, the citizens began complaining of the high prices that the Arabian traders were charging for the oriental goods because of their monopoly, and urged their governments to take the initiative to break their supremacy in the sea trade. Thus, in the beginning, Ptolemy II (985- 246 B.C.), the Greek ruler of Egypt, reopened the Nile-Red Sea canal originally dug by Pharaoh Sesostris some seventeen centuries ago. Consequently, it was through this canal that the Egyptian fleet entered the Red Sea for the first time, but it could not succeed much against the Sabaeans. When Egypt fell to the Romans they brought a stronger merchant marine into the Red Sea and put a naval fleet at its back. The Sabaeans could not withstand this force. Consequently, the Romans set up their trade colonies at every seaport, arranged supplies for the ships and also stationed their military troops wherever possible. At last, the time came when Aden passed under the military occupation of the Romans. In this connection, the Roman and the Abyssinian kingdoms also entered secret pacts against the Sabaeans, which ultimately deprived this nation of its political freedom as well.

After losing control over maritime trade the Sabaeans were left with trade over the land route only, but many factors combined to gradually break its back too. First, the Nabataeans ousted them from all the colonies of the upper Hejaz and Jordan, from Petra to Al-Ula. Then in 106 A.D. the Romans put an end to the Nabataean kingdom and captured all the Syrian and Jordanian territories up to the Hejaz. After this Abyssinia and Rome jointly tried to ruin the Sabaean trade completely by taking advantage of their internal conflicts. That is why the Abyssinians intervened in the Yaman again and again, till at last they brought the entire land under their occupation.

Thus, Allah’s wrath caused this nation to be toppled from the heights of glory and prosperity into oblivion from which they were never able to rise again. There was a time when the Greeks and the Romans felt tempted when they heard of the legendary wealth of these people. Strabo writes, “The Sabaeans use gold

and silver utensils and even the ceilings, walls and doors of their houses are bedecked with ivory, gold, silver and jewels.” Pliny says, “The entire wealth of Rome and Persia is flowing into Sabaean hands. They are the richest people of the world today, and their fertile land abounds in gardens, crops and cattle.” Artemidorus says, “These people roll in luxury. They burn cinnamon, sandalwood and other sweet smelling wood as fuel.” Likewise, other Greek historians relate that the passengers passing by their shores can smell the perfumes of their land in the merchant ships at sea. For the first time in history they built a skyscraper, called the castle of Ghumdan, on the hill top in Sana. This citadel, according to the Arab historians, a twenty storey building, each storey being 36 feet high. Thus did they prosper and enjoy life as long as Allah favored them with His bounties. At last, when they transgressed all limits in their ingratitude, the Almighty Allah also withdrew His attention, and they were so utterly destroyed as if they had never existed at all.

قُلِ ادۡعُوا الَّذِيۡنَ زَعَمۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ لَا يَمۡلِكُوۡنَ مِثۡقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ لَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا لَهُمۡ فِيۡهِمَا مِنۡ شِرۡكٍ وَّ مَا لَهٗ مِنۡهُمۡ مِّنۡ ظَهِيۡرٍ ﴿۲۲﴾

(34-22) (O Prophet), [38] say to those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity: “Call upon those whom you fancied to be deities beside Allah. [39] They own not even the smallest particle, neither in the heavens nor on the earth; nor do they have any share in the ownership of either of them. Nor is any of them even a helper of Allah.

(38) Until now the mushriks’ wrong notions about the Hereafter have been dealt with. From here the discourse turns to the refutation of shirk itself.

(39) That is, Allah makes and un-makes the destinies of individuals and nations and kingdoms in ways as you have seen from the stories of the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them) and the people of Saba. Now, you may invoke, if you so like, these self-made gods of yours to see whether they also possess the power to change someone’s good fortune into misfortune and misfortune into good fortune.

وَ لَا تَنۡفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِنۡدَهٗۤ اِلَّا لِمَنۡ اَذِنَ لَهٗ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا فُزِّعَ عَنۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ قَالُوۡا مَاذَا ۙ قَالَ رَبُّكُمۡ ؕ قَالُوا الۡحَقَّ ۚ وَ هُوَ الۡعَلِىُّ الۡكَبِيۡرُ ﴿۲۳﴾

(34-23) No intercession can avail with Allah except for him whom Allah permits (to intercede). [40] When their hearts are relieved of fright they will ask the intercessors: “What did your Lord say?” They will reply: “(He said) what is right, and He is the High, the Great.” [41]

(40) That is, not to speak of owning something, or being a partner in the ownership of something, or being a helper of Allah in any way, there exists no one in the universe, who of his own accord, may intercede for someone before Allah. You are involved in the misunderstanding that there are some beloved ones of God, or some such powerful personalities, who can force and press God to accept their intercession, whereas the fact is that no one will dare utter a word of recommendation there without

Allah’s permission. Only such a one will be able to make his submissions who is permitted by Allah to do so, and will intercede for him alone for whom permission for intercession is granted. (To understand the distinction between the Islamic concept of intercession and the polytheistic concept, see (Surah Yunus, Ayats 3, 18); (Surah Hud, Ayats 76, 105); (Surah Ta Ha, Ayat 109); (Surah Al- Anbiya, Ayat 28); (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 76).”

(41) Here a graphic picture has been drawn of the time when, on the Day of Resurrection, an intercessor will be seeking permission to intercede on behalf of someone. It presents this scene: “After submitting the application for permission, both the intercessor and the person for whom intercession is being provided are awaiting the reply in a state of restlessness and awe. At last, when the permission is granted and the person perceives satisfaction in the face of the intercessor, he feels a little comforted and asks the intercessor: “What has your Lord said?” The intercessor says, “The truth”: permission has been granted. What is meant to be impressed is this: “O foolish people! Such will be the awe of the great court of Allah! How dare you entertain the notion that anybody will have you forgiven by his own power, or dare behave stubbornly and tell Allah: These are my favorites: they will have to be forgiven!”

قُلۡ مَنۡ يَّرۡزُقُكُمۡ مِّنَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ وَ اِنَّاۤ اَوۡ اِيَّاكُمۡ لَعَلٰى هُدًى اَوۡ فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ﴿۲۴﴾

(34-24) Ask them, (O Prophet): “Who provides you sustenance from the heavens and the earth?” Say: “Allah. (42) Now, inevitably only one of us is rightly guided, either we or you; and the other is in manifest error.” (43)

(42) There is a subtle gap between the question and the answer. The addressees were the mushriks who not only did not disbelieve in the existence of Allah but also knew and believed that the keys of the provisions are in His hand. But in spite of this they also held others as Allah’s associates in His work. Now when they were confronted with the question: Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth, they were put in a

tight corner. If they mentioned another besides Allah, they would say a thing contrary to their own and their people's creed. If they showed stubbornness and said such a thing, they feared that their own people would immediately refute them. And if they acknowledged that Allah alone is their Sustainer, they would immediately be confronted with the next question: Then, why and what for have you made these others as your gods? When Allah is the Sustainer, why should these others be served and worshipped? Thus they stand confused and bewildered. Neither can they say that Allah alone is the Sustainer nor that another god is the sustainer. When the questioner sees that they do not make any answer, he himself answers his question and says, Allah.

(43) This sentence contains an important point of the wisdom of preaching. The logical conclusion of the question and answer cited above would be that the one who serves and worships Allah should be on right guidance and the one who worships others beside Him should be misguided. Therefore, apparently, the conclusion should have been: "Then, we are rightly guided and you are misguided." But such a plain and straight reply, although correct and true, would not have been a wise thing from the point of view of preaching. For when a person is addressed and told plainly that he is misguided and the speaker claims to be rightly guided himself, he will become obdurate and will never be inclined to accept and acknowledge the truth. As the Messengers of Allah are not sent only for the sake of speaking the plain truth, but are also entrusted with the duty of reforming the wrongdoers as tactfully as possible. Allah has not asked His Prophet (peace be upon him) to tell them plainly, after the question and answer, that they are all misguided and that he alone is rightly-guided. Instead of this, it was said: Tell them: it has become clear that we regard as our Deity only Him Who is the Sustainer, and you have taken as deities those who are not sustainers. Now, it is not possible that both you and we should be on right guidance simultaneously. Only one of us can be rightly-guided, and the other inevitably will be misguided. Now it is for you to consider and judge who is being proved by reason to be in the right and who in the wrong.

قُ لۡ لَّا تُسۡـَٔلُوۡنَ عَمَّاۤ اَجۡرَمۡنَا وَ لَا نُسۡـَٔلُ عَمَّا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾

(34-25) Tell them: “You will not be called to account about the guilt we committed, nor will we be called to account for what you did.” (44)

(44) The about question had already made the listeners to think seriously, This additional sentence was meant to make them think even more seriously, as if to say, “It is in our own interest individually that we should consider and decide the question of guidance and misguidance rightly. For if we are misguided, we shall ourselves bear the consequences of our error; you will not be held answerable for it. Therefore, it is in our own interest that we should consider seriously, before adopting a creed, that we are not following a wrong way. Likewise, you also should think seriously for your own sake, not for our sake in any way, and make sure that you are not investing your life’s capital in a false creed. For if you committed an error in this regard, you would be harming only your own selves and not us.

قُ لۡ يَجۡمَعُ بَيۡنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ يَفۡتَحُ بَيۡنَنَا بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ وَ هُوَ الۡفَتَّاحُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ ﴿۲۶﴾

(34-26) Say: “Our Lord will bring us together and then He will rightly judge between us. He is the Great Judge, the All-Knowing.” (45)

(45) This is the last and the strongest motive for the consideration of which the listeners’ attention has been invited. It means to impress: The thing is not only that there is the difference of the truth and the falsehood between you and us, but that both we and you have to be presented before our Lord, the Being who knows the truth and is also fully aware of the affairs of each of us. There before Him not only will this thing be decided who, between you and us, was in the right and who in the wrong, but this issue also will be settled how we made every possible effort to make the truth plain to you, and how you opposed and resisted us in your antagonism to the truth.

قُلۡ اَرُوۡنِيَ الَّذِيۡنَ اَلۡحَقۡتُمۡ بِهٖ شُرَكَآءَ كَلَّا ؕ بَلۡ هُوَ اللّٰهُ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿۲۷﴾

(34-27) Say: “Show me those whom you have attached to Him as His associates (in Divinity).” (46) Nay, Allah alone is Most Mighty, Most Wise.

(46) That is, before you take the great risk due to your reliance on these deities, just tell me here who among them is so powerful as to arise in the court of Allah as your supporter and save you from His punishment.

وَ مَا اَرۡسَلۡنٰکَ اِلَّا کَآفَّۃً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِیۡرًا وَّ نَذِیۡرًا وَّ لٰکِنَّ اَکۡثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا یَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

(34-28) (O Prophet), We have not sent you forth but as a herald of good news and a warner for all mankind. But most people do not know. (47)

(47) That is, you have not been sent as a Prophet for the people of this city, or this country, or this age alone, but for the people of the entire world and for all times, but your compatriots do not recognize your worth and they do not realize how great a person has been raised among them as a Prophet (peace be upon him) and how uniquely they have been blessed by Allah.

The fact that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has not been appointed a Prophet only for his own country or for his own age but for all mankind till Resurrection, has been stated at several places in the Quran. For instance:

“And this Quran has been revealed to me that I should thereby warn you and all those whom it may reach.” (Surah Al-Anam, Ayat 19).

“O Prophet, say: O mankind, I am a Messenger to all of you from Allah.” (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 158).

“O Prophet, We have sent you to be a real blessing for all the people of the world.” (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 107).

“Highly blessed is He Who has sent down Al-Furqan to His servant so that he may be a warner to all mankind.” (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 1).

The same thing has been stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a number of Ahadith in different ways. For example:

“I have been sent to all mankind, the black as well as the white.” (Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyat Abu Musa Ashari).

“I have been sent to the mankind all together, whereas every Prophet before me was sent only to his own people.” (Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyat Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas).

“Before me every Prophet was specifically sent to his own people; but I have been sent for all mankind.” (Bukhari and Muslim: From traditions related by Jabir bin Abdullah).

“My appointment as a Prophet and Resurrection are like this. Saying this the Prophet (peace be upon him) raised his two fingers.” (Bukhari and Muslim). What he meant by this was: “Just as no third finger intervenes between these two fingers, so there is no prophethood between me the and Resurrection. After me there will be Resurrection only, and I shall be the Prophet till Resurrection.”

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

(34-29) They ask you: “When will this promise (of Resurrection) be fulfilled, if what you say is true?” (48)

(48) That is, “When will the time come about which you say: Our Lord will gather you together, then He will judge between us rightly? We have been denying you persistently and opposing you openly for so long. Why is not then the judgment being passed against us?

قُلْ لَّكُمْ مِّيعَادُ يَوْمٍ لَّا تَسْتَاْخِرُونَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَّلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

(34-30) Say: “Your day is appointed, you can neither hold back its coming by an hour, nor hasten it by an hour.” (49)

(49) In other words, the reply means: Allah’s judgments are not subject to your whims that He should be bound to do a thing at the time which you have fixed for it. He carries out His designs only according to His own discretion. You cannot understand how long is mankind to be allowed to function in this world in the scheme of Allah, how many individuals and how many nations are to be put to the test in different ways, and what will be the right time for the Day of Judgment and summoning mankind of all ages for rendering their accounts. All this will be accomplished only at the time which Allah has fixed for it in His scheme of things. Your demands can neither hasten it on by a second nor your supplications can withhold it by a second.

وَ قَالَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا لَنۡ نُّؤۡمِنَ بِهٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنِ وَ لَا بِالَّذِىۡ بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ ؕ وَ لَوۡ
تَرٰۤى اِذِ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ مَوۡقُوۡفُوۡنَ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ ۖ يَرۡجِعُ بَعۡضُهُمۡ اِلٰى بَعۡضِ ۨ الۡقَوۡلَ ۚ يَقُوۡلُ الَّذِيۡنَ
اسۡتُضۡعِفُوۡا لِلَّذِيۡنَ اسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡۤا لَوۡلَاۤ اَنۡتُمۡ لَكُنَّا مُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۳۱

(34-31) The unbelievers say: “We shall never believe in this Qur'an, nor in any Scripture before it.” (50) If you could only see the wrong-doers arrayed before their Lord, each bandying charges against the other. Those who were suppressed will say to those who waxed arrogant: “Had it not been for you, we would have been believers.” (51)

(50) The allusion is to the pagans of Arabia, who did not believe in any divine Book.

(51) That is, the common people who are following their leaders, chiefs, saints and rulers blindly, and are not prepared to listen to any word of advice from a well-wisher against them. When the same people will see the actual reality and will also remember how their religious leaders used to misrepresent things, and when they will realize what doom they are going to meet on account of following their leaders, they will turn on them, and say, “O wretched people, you led us astray: you are responsible for all our afflictions. Had you not misguided us, we

would have listened to the Messengers of Allah and believed in what they said.

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا أَنَحْنُ صَدَدْنَاكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدَىٰ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَكُم بَلْ كُنتُم مُّجْرِمِينَ ٣٢

(34-32) The arrogant ones will retort to those who were suppressed: “What! Did we bar you from the guidance after it came to you? Not at all; rather you yourselves were evil-doers.” (52)

(52) That is, they will say: We had no power by which a few of us could have compelled hundreds of thousands of the people like you to follow us. If you had the will to believe, you could have deposed us from leadership and power and authority and government. In fact, you were our army, you were the source of our wealth and power. But for your offerings and gifts and taxes we should have been paupers. Had you not sworn allegiance to us, we could not have flourished as saints even for a day. Had you not appreciated and applauded us as leaders, we would have remained unknown. Had you not become our army and fought against the whole world for our sake, we could not have ruled over a single individual. Now why don’t you admit that you yourselves did not want to follow the way that the Messengers had presented before you. You were the slaves of your own lusts and desires, and the demands of your selves could not be fulfilled by the righteous way of life presented by the Messengers but by what we presented before you. You were heedless of the lawful and the unlawful and craved for the luxuries of life, which we only could provide you. You were in search of such guides as could give you the license to commit any sin, any crime, and take on themselves the responsibility to have you forgiven by God, in exchange for gifts. You wanted to listen to such religious scholars only who could please you by proving every kind of shirk and every innovation in religion and every lust of yourself to be the very truth. You needed such forgers who could invent a new religion by altering the religion of God after your desires. You wanted to follow such leaders who could help you become prosperous in this world, no matter how you fared in the

Hereafter. You wished to have such rulers who were immoral and dishonest so that under their patronage you also could have the freedom to indulge in any sin, any immorality. Thus, you and we were equal partners in the bargain. Now you cannot delude anyone by saying that you were absolutely innocent and that we had spoiled and corrupted you against your will.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا بَلْ مَكْرُ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ اِذْ تَاْمُرُوْنَنَآ اَنْ نَّكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهٗٓ اَنْدَادًا ؕ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ ؕ وَجَعَلْنَا الْاَغْلٰلَ فِيْٓ اَعْنَاقِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۳۳

(34-33) Those who were suppressed will say to those who waxed arrogant: “By no means; it was your scheming, night and day, when you would enjoin us to disbelieve in Allah and set up others as equals to Him.” (53) When they are confronted with the chastisement, they will be remorseful in their hearts. We shall put fetters around the necks of the unbelievers. Can people be requited except for their deeds?

(53) In other words, the common people’s reply will be: “How can you hold us as equal partners in this responsibility? Do you also remember what sort of trickeries and deceptions and false propaganda you practiced and what efforts you used to make to tempt and entice the people day and night. It is not just that you presented the world before us and we were allured, but this is also a fact that you used to befool us by your frauds and deceptions and each one of you brought a new bait every day to tempt and lure the simple people.”

The Quran has made mention of the dispute between the religious guides and their followers at different places in different ways. For details, see Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 38- 39; (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 21); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 63); (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayats 66-68); (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayats 47-48); (Surah Ha Meem Sajdah, Ayat 29).

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِيْ قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ اِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوْهَآ ۙ اِنَّا بِمَآ اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ۳۴

(34-34) We never sent a warner to any town but its wealthy ones said: “We disbelieve in the Message you have brought.”[54]

(54) That the message of the Prophets was first of all opposed and resisted by the well-to-do people who possessed wealth and influence and authority. This has been stated at many places in the Quran. For instance, see (Surah Al-Anam, Ayat 123); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 60, 66, 75, 88, 90); (Surah Hud, Ayat 27); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 16); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 24, 33 to 38, 46, 47); (Surah Az- Zukhruf, Ayat 23).

وَ قَالُ وۡا نَحۡ نُ اَكۡ ثَرُ اَمۡ وَالًا وَّ اَوۡ لَادًا ۙ وَّ مَا نَحۡ نُ بِمُعَذَّبِيۡنَ ﴿۳۵﴾

(34-35) They always said: “We have more wealth and children than you have, and we shall not be chastised.” (55)

(55) Their reasoning was: “We are greater favorites of Allah than you. That is why He has favored us with the blessings of which you are deprived, or have received them in lesser measure. Why should Allah have given us all these provisions and wealth and power, had He not been pleased with us? Now, how can we believe that Allah Who is showering us with all kinds of His blessings here will punish us in the Hereafter? He will punish only those who are deprived of His favors here,”

This misunderstanding of the world-worshippers has also been mentioned at several places in the Quran and refuted. For instance, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 126, 212); (Surah At-Taubah, Ayats 55, 69); (Surah Hud, Ayats 3, 27); (Surah Ar-Rad, Ayats 26); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 34 to 43); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 73 to 77); (Surah Ta Ha, Ayat 131); (Surah Al- Muminun, Ayats 55 to 61); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 111); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 76 to 83); (Surah Ar-Rum, Ayat 9); (Surah Al-Muddaththir, Ayats 11-26): (Surah Al-Fajr, Ayats 15 to 20).

قُ لۡ اِنَّ رَبِّىۡ يَبۡ سُطُ الرِّزۡ قَ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقۡ دِرُ وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكۡ ثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعۡ لَمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾

(34-36) (O Prophet), say to them: “My Lord grants provision abundantly to whomsoever He pleases and straitens it for whomsoever He pleases. But most people do not know this. (56)

(56) They do not understand the wisdom on which the system of the distribution of provisions is based in the world, and are thus involved in the misunderstanding that whoever is being given

abundantly is a beloved of Allah and whoever is being given sparingly is under His wrath. The fact, however, is that if a person looks around with open eyes he will see that in most cases the people with filthy and repulsive character are prosperous, and many good and noble people, who are known and recognized as morally pure, are found living in poverty. Now, how can a sensible person say that Allah dislikes the people of pure character and favors the wicked wrongdoers?

وَ مَا اَمۡوَالُكُمۡ وَ لَاۤ اَوۡلَادُكُمۡ بِالَّتِىۡ تُقَرِّبُكُمۡ عِنۡدَنَا زُلۡفٰۤى اِلَّا مَنۡ اٰمَنَ
وَ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا ۫ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ جَزَآءُ الضِّعۡفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوۡا وَ هُمۡ فِى الۡغُرُفٰتِ اٰمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۳۷﴾

(34-37) It is not your riches nor your children that make you near-stationed to Us, except for him who has faith and acts righteously; (57) it is they who will receive double the recompense for their deeds. They shall live in lofty mansions in perfect peace. (58)

(57) This can have two meanings and both are correct:

(1) That which brings the people nearer to Allah is not wealth and children but faith and righteous deeds; and,

(2) wealth and children can become a means of nearness to Allah only for that believing, righteous person, who spends his wealth in the way of Allah and tries to make his children God-conscious and righteous by good education and training.

(58) Here also is a subtle allusion that their blessing shall be imperishable, and their reward endless. For one cannot enjoy with full satisfaction of the heart a reward which is likely to perish or withdrawn suddenly at any time.

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ يَسۡعَوۡنَ فِىۡۤ اٰيٰتِنَا مُعٰجِزِيۡنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِى الۡعَذَابِ مُحۡضَرُوۡنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

(34-38) As for those who work against Our Signs so as to frustrate them, they shall be arraigned into the chastisement.

قُ لۡ اِنَّ رَبِّیۡ یَبۡسُطُ الرِّزۡقَ لِمَنۡ یَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِہٖ وَ یَقۡدِرُ لَہٗ ؕ وَ مَاۤ اَنۡفَقۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ شَیۡءٍ فَہُوَ یُخۡلِفُہٗ ۚ وَ ہُوَ خَیۡرُ الرّٰزِقِیۡنَ ﴿۳۹﴾

(34-39) Say, (O Prophet): “Verily, my Lord grants provision abundantly to whomsoever He pleases and straitens it for whomsoever He pleases. (59) Whatever you spend, He will replace it. He is the Best of all Providers.” (60)

(59) The repetition of this theme is meant to impress this: The abundance or restriction of the provisions is connected with Allah’s will, not with His pleasure and approval. Under the will of Allah every good or evil person is receiving his provision. Both, those who believe in Him and those who do not believe, are getting their provisions. Neither is abundance of the provisions a proof that one is Allah’s favorite servant nor is its restriction a sign that one is under His wrath. Under His will a wicked and dishonest person prospers, although wickedness and dishonesty are disliked by Allah. On the contrary, under the same divine will a truthful and honest man suffers losses and undergoes hardships although these qualities are liked by Allah. Hence, the person who regards the material gains and benefits as the criterion for the good and evil is grossly mistaken. The real criterion is Allah’s pleasure and approval which is attained through the moral qualities liked and approved by Him. With these qualities if a person gets the worldly blessings as well, it will certainly be Allah’s bounty for which he should be grateful to Him. But if from the moral point of view a person is Allah’s rebel and is disobedient to Him and in spite of that is being favored with worldly blessings, it would mean that he is preparing himself for a strict accountability and a most severe punishment.

(60) Sustainer, Creator, Inventor, Donor and many other such attributes are in fact the attributes of Allah, but are metaphorically applied to men also. For example, about a person we may say, He provided a job for so-and-so, or he made or invented such and such a thing, or he made a gift to so-and-so. Accordingly, Allah has used the word Khair ar Raziqin (the Best of Providers) for Himself. It means to impress the fact that Allah is

the best of providers among all those about whom you think that they are in any way connected with arranging the provisions.

وَيَوۡمَ يَحۡشُرُهُمۡ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ أَهَٰٓؤُلَآءِ إِيَّاكُمۡ كَانُواْ يَعۡبُدُونَ ٤٠

(34-40) And on the Day when He will muster them all and will ask the angels: “Are they the ones who worshipped you?” (61)

(61) Since the earliest times the polytheists in every age have been looking upon the angels as gods and goddesses and carving their idols and worshipping them. One has been regarded as the god of rain, another of lightning and another of wind; one is the goddess of wealth, another of knowledge and another of life and death. About this Allah says that on the Day of Resurrection the angels will be asked: Were you being worshipped as deities by these people? This question is not meant merely to find out the truth, but to ask: Did you approve of their worship? Did you tell the people that you were their deities, so they should worship you? Or, did you wish that the people should do obeisance to you? This question will not only be asked of the angels but of all those beings who have been worshipped as gods in the world. In Surah Al-Furqan it has been said: “On that Day (Allah) will gather all these people together as well as their deities, whom they worship beside Allah. Then he will ask them: Did you mislead these servants of Mine, or did they themselves go astray? (Ayat 17).

قَالُواْ سُبۡحَٰنَكَ أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِن دُونِهِمۖ بَلۡ كَانُواْ يَعۡبُدُونَ ٱلۡجِنَّۖ أَكۡثَرُهُم بِهِم مُّؤۡمِنُونَ ٤١

(34-41) They will reply: “Glory to You! You are our Protector, not they. (62) Nay, they rather used to worship the jinn. Most of them believe in them.”

(62) That is, they will answer: You are Pure and Exalted far above that another should be made a partner in Godhead with you. We have no connection with these people. We are not responsible for them nor for what they did. We are Your servants only.

فَالۡیَوۡمَ لَا یَمۡلِکُ بَعۡضُکُمۡ لِبَعۡضٍ نَّفۡعًا وَّ لَا ضَرًّا ؕ وَ نَقُوۡلُ لِلَّذِیۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا ذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِیۡ کُنۡتُمۡ بِہَا تُکَذِّبُوۡنَ ﴿۴۲﴾

(34-42) Today none of you has the power to benefit or harm another; (63) and We shall say to the evil-doers: “Taste now the chastisement of the Fire which you used to deny, calling it a lie.”

(63) In this sentence, jinn implies the satans among the jinns. The answer means: Apparently these people worshipped us, by mentioning our names and by making our images according to their imaginations. But, in fact, they did not worship us but worshipped the satans, for the satans only had shown them the way that they should regard others than Allah as fulfillers of their needs, and should make offerings before them.

This verse clearly brings out the error of the view of those people who take the word jinn to mean the dwellers of the mountains and deserts and rural areas. Can a sensible person imagine, on the basis of this verse, that the people used to worship the dwellers of the mountains and the deserts and the villages and believed in them? This verse also throws light on another meaning of ibadat. It shows that ibadat is not mere worship and service, but it also implies carrying out somebody’s orders and obeying him without question. Even if one curses another (as one curses Satan) but at the time follows his way, one would be performing his ibadat. For other examples, see (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 117-119); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 60); (Surah At- Taubah, Ayat 31); (Surah Maryam, Ayat 42); (Surah Al- Qasas, Ayat 63).

وَ اِذَا تُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِمۡ اٰیٰتُنَا بَیِّنٰتٍ قَالُوۡا مَا ہٰذَاۤ اِلَّا رَجُلٌ یُّرِیۡدُ اَنۡ یَّصُدَّکُمۡ عَمَّا کَانَ یَعۡبُدُ اٰبَآؤُکُمۡ ۚ وَ قَالُوۡا مَا ہٰذَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اِفۡکٌ مُّفۡتَرًی ؕ وَ قَالَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا لِلۡحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَہُمۡ ۙ اِنۡ ہٰذَاۤ اِلَّا سِحۡرٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ ﴿۴۳﴾

(34-43) When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them they say: “This is a person who wants to turn you away from the deities whom your ancestors worshipped.” They say: “This is nothing but an invented falsehood.” And when the Truth came to the unbelievers they declared: “This is nothing but plain sorcery,”

وَ مَا اٰتَیۡنٰہُمۡ مِّنۡ کُتُبٍ یَّدۡرُسُوۡنَہَا وَ مَاۤ اَرۡسَلۡنَاۤ اِلَیۡہِمۡ قَبۡلَکَ مِنۡ نَّذِیۡرٍ ؕ﴿۴۴﴾

(34-44) whereas We gave them no Books that they could study nor sent to them any warner before you. (64)

(64) That is, neither a book from God has come to them before this nor a messenger, who might have taught them to worship and serve others than God. Therefore, they are denying the invitation to Tauhid given by the Quran and Muhammad (peace be upon him) due to sheer ignorance, and not on the basis of any knowledge. They have in fact no authority for this.

وَ کَذَّبَ الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِہِمۡ ۙ وَ مَا بَلَغُوۡا مِعۡشَارَ مَاۤ اٰتَیۡنٰہُمۡ فَکَذَّبُوۡا رُسُلِیۡ ۟ فَکَیۡفَ کَانَ نَکِیۡرِ ﴿۴۵﴾

(34-45) Those who went before them also denounced (Allah's Messengers) as liars. They have not attained even a tenth of what We had given them. But when they rejected My Messengers, calling them liars, how terrible was My chastisement! (65)

(65) That is, the people of Makkah have not attained even one-tenth of the power and grandeur and prosperity that was possessed by those people. But just see how they went to their doom ultimately and their power and wealth could not avail them anything, when they refused to believe in the realities presented before them by the Prophets, and founded their system of life on falsehood.

قُلۡ اِنَّمَاۤ اَعِظُکُمۡ بِوَاحِدَۃٍ ۚ اَنۡ تَقُوۡمُوۡا لِلّٰہِ مَثۡنٰی وَ فُرَادٰی ثُمَّ تَتَفَکَّرُوۡا ۟ مَا بِصَاحِبِکُمۡ مِّنۡ جِنَّۃٍ ؕ اِنۡ ہُوَ اِلَّا نَذِیۡرٌ لَّکُمۡ بَیۡنَ یَدَیۡ عَذَابٍ شَدِیۡدٍ ﴿۴۶﴾

(34-46) Say to them, (O Prophet): “I give you but one counsel: stand up (for heaven's sake), singly and in pairs, and then think: what is it in your companion(to wit, Muhammad) that could be deemed as madness?” (66) He is nothing but a warner, warning you before the coming of a grievous chastisement. (67)

(66) That is, free yourselves of selfish interests and whims and prejudices and consider this sincerely for the sake of Allah: consider this singly as well as jointly in two and three and four in an objective manner and consider it well and deeply. What after all can be the reason that the person whom you call a madman today was, until yesterday, being looked upon as a very wise man among you? The incident that happened a little before his appointment to Prophethood is well known among you. When after the reconstruction of the Kabah the different clans of the Quraish were going to clash among themselves on the question as to who should place the Black Stone in the wall, you yourselves had unanimously agreed to accept Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the arbitrator, and he had settled the question amicably to the entire satisfaction of all concerned. Now, how is it that you have started calling the same person mad, whose wisdom and sagacity has been thus tested and experienced by your whole nation? What is it if not stubbornness? Do you really mean the same that you say with your tongues?

(67) That is, do you call him mad only for this reason? Do you regard someone wise who finds you following the path of ruin and applauds you. Do you regard someone mad who warns you beforehand of the coming of a disaster and shows you the way to safety and well-being?

قُلۡ مَا سَاَلۡتُكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَجۡرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمۡ ؕ اِنۡ اَجۡرِىَ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدٌ ۝۴۷

(34-47) Say to them: “Whatever recompense I might ask of you, it shall be yours. (68) My recompense is with Allah, and He is witness over everything.” (69)

(68) Another meaning of this can be: “I do not ask anything but your well-being: My only recompense is that you should be reformed.” This thing has been expressed at another place thus; “O Prophet, say to them: I do not ask of you any recompense for this: I only ask of the one, who will, to adopt the way of his Lord.” (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 57).

(69) That is, “The accusers may say whatever they like but Allah knows everything. He is a witness that I am a selfless person. I am not perforating this mission for any selfish motive.”

قُلۡ اِنَّ رَبِّیۡ یَقۡذِفُ بِالۡحَقِّ ۚ عَلَّامُ الۡغُیُوۡبِ ﴿۴۸﴾

(34-48) Say to them: “My Lord hurls down the Truth (upon me). (70) He knows fully all that lies beyond the range of perception.”

(70) The words yaqdhifu bil-haqq give two meanings:

(1) He inspires me with the knowledge of the truth by revelation. and,

(2) He is making the truth to prevail. He is crushing falsehood by means of the truth.

قُلۡ جَآءَ الۡحَقُّ وَ مَا یُبۡدِئُ الۡبَاطِلُ وَ مَا یُعِیۡدُ ﴿۴۹﴾

(34-49) Say: “The Truth has come and falsehood can neither originate nor recreate anything.”

قُلۡ اِنۡ ضَلَلۡتُ فَاِنَّمَاۤ اَضِلُّ عَلٰی نَفۡسِیۡ ۚ وَ اِنِ اہۡتَدَیۡتُ فَبِمَا یُوۡحِیۡۤ اِلَیَّ رَبِّیۡ ؕ اِنَّہٗ سَمِیۡعٌ قَرِیۡبٌ ﴿۵۰﴾

(34-50) Say: “If I go astray then the hurt of straying will come only upon me. But if I am rightly-guided, that is only because of the revelation that my Lord makes to me. He is All-Hearing, Ever Nigh.” (71)

(71) From this verse some people of the modern age have argued thus: According to it the Prophet (peace be upon him) also could go astray: rather used to go astray. That is why Allah has made the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself say: “If I have gone astray, I am myself responsible for this. And I am on right guidance only when my Lord sends down revelation (i.e. verses of the Quran) to me.” By this wrong interpretation these unjust people in fact want to prove that the Prophet’s (peace be upon

him) life was, God forbid, a combination of guidance and error, and Allah had made him confess this before the disbelievers least one should adopt his obedience completely, taking him to be wholly on right guidance. The fact however is that whoever considers the theme in its correct context will know that here the words, if I have gone astray, are not meant to give the meaning that the Prophet (peace be upon him) actually used to go astray, but it means: “If I have gone astray, as you accuse that I have, and my claim to Prophethood and my this invitation to Tauhid are the result of the same deviation, as you seem to imagine, then the burden of my going astray, will be on me alone; you will not be held responsible for it. But if I am on right guidance, as in fact I am, it is because I receive revelation from my Lord, by virtue of which I have obtained the knowledge of the guidance. My Lord is near at hand and is hearing everything. He knows whether I have gone astray or I am on right guidance from Him.”

وَلَوۡ تَرٰۤی اِذۡ فَزِعُوۡا فَلَا فَوۡتَ وَ اُخِذُوۡا مِنۡ مَّکَانٍ قَرِیۡبٍ ۙ﴿۵۱﴾

(34-51) If you could only see when the unbelievers will go about in a state of terror. They will have no escape and will be seized from a place near at hand. (72)

(72) That is, “On the Day of Resurrection, every culprit will be seized in a way as though he lay in hiding close by. As he will try to flee, he will be seized immediately.”

وَّ قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا بِہٖ ۚ وَ اَنّٰی لَہُمُ التَّنَاوُشُ مِنۡ مَّکَانٍۢ بَعِیۡدٍ ۚ﴿۵۲﴾

(34-52) They will then say: “We believe in it”; (73) but whence can they attain it from so far-off a place? (74)

(73) “We do believe (now) in it”: “We believe in the message presented by the Messenger in the world.”

(74) That is, “They should have believed when they lived in the world; they have come a long way away from it. After having arrived in the next world how can they get a chance to repent and believe?”

وَّقَدۡ كَفَرُوۡا بِهٖ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ۚ وَيَقۡذِفُوۡنَ بِالۡغَيۡبِ مِنۡ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيۡدٍ ۝٥٣

(34-53) They disbelieved in it before and indulged in conjectures from far away. (75)

(75) That is, they used to charge the Messenger (peace be upon him) and the believers with false accusations and used to taunt and mock his message. Sometimes they said he was a sorcerer or a madman; sometimes they ridiculed Tauhid and the concept of the Hereafter; sometimes they invented the story that someone has taught him everything; and sometimes they said that the believers had started following him only on account of folly and ignorance.

وَحِيۡلَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ وَبَيۡنَ مَا يَشۡتَهُوۡنَ كَمَا فُعِلَ بِاَشۡيَاعِهِمۡ مِّنۡ قَبۡلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا فِىۡ شَكٍّ مُّرِيۡبٍ ۝٥٤

(34-54) A barrier will be placed between them and what they desire, as was done with the likes of them before. Surely they were in a disquieting doubt. (76)

(76) As a matter of fact, no one adopts shirk and atheism and denial of the Hereafter by conviction, nor can he, for conviction comes from knowledge. And no one has the knowledge that there is no God, or that many others have a share in divine authority, or that there should be no Hereafter. Thus, whoever has adopted these beliefs in the world, has raised a structure on mere conjecture, which has no basis except doubt and suspicion, and this suspicion has led him to sheer error. Consequently, they doubted God’s existence, they doubted the truth of Tauhid, they doubted the coming of the Hereafter; so much so that they made this doubt their faith and did not listen to the Prophets and expended and wasted their entire lifetime indulging in a wrong creed and wrong way of life.